

FECUNDING

By

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Submitted to the graduate degree program in Art
and the Graduate Faculty of the University of Kansas
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Masters of Arts.

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Date defended: March 10, 2009

The Thesis Committee for Minerva E. Ortiz certifies
that this is the approved Version of the following thesis:

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Committee:

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Date approved: April 24, 2009

Introduction

The ways in which Mexican homes are constructed and sustained speaks of cultural differences between Mexico and the US. In my experience, Mexican homes were pieced together with recycled cements and bricks, or materials were purchased over time because of limited economic funds. Consequently, a lack of material uniformity added an element of instability to these structures. As the walls and paint of a house wore, the strata of history were revealed. Other layers were added to patch the wear, as people had more pressing financial necessities.

Conversely, American homes are usually pristine, new or newly remodeled. Building materials are purchased at one time to ensure sound craftsmanship and durability. Hence, Mexican homes tend to have a sense of history, and American homes often possess a sense of newness. Either way, both homes offer shelter.

Background

Being a Mexican-American immigrant has motivated my awareness of relativity and possibility. As a mixed-culture person, I straddle a line to keep in touch with both traditions because each has enriched my life. People may share the same needs, but there are different ways of fulfilling these because situations are varied and change constantly. Hence, living with “two” different cultures has taught me that there aren’t absolute truths. While this relativity at times has left me feeling confused and stranded, it has also allowed me to appreciate the many possibilities of life. Diversity and tolerance are bedrock social ideals in my life.

Concept

The importance of diversity and heterogeneity in the series titled *Fecunding* stems from my recognition of the value of my mixed cultural background. While confusing at times, it's also made me aware that although differences create conflict, they also work together to create possibility. Hence, metaphors about blurred boundaries between dichotomies emerged throughout the work.

One of the most important relationships in the work is the reconciliation between the richness of history and the opportunity for reinvention. This interaction alludes to the cooperation of differing forces while metaphorically bridging my concepts of Mexican history and American yearning for new beginnings. Creating a textured history by reworking decisions made on the paintings caused the subjects to appear evocative and grounded in time. Meanwhile, exploring diverse subjects and changing the ways in which each was expressed allowed me to explore new ideas. Thus, combining the historical and the contemporary created richness and diversity in the series.

Process

I engaged in a knowledge feeding frenzy. I got to explore any and every subject I cared about. I opened up to information that was fantastic and ghastly. I was curious. I allowed myself to be curious. I went to yahoo news for advice on the continuously changing information about dating, relationships, scientific discoveries, diets, politics and medicine; I read the magazines *Psychology Today*, and *New*

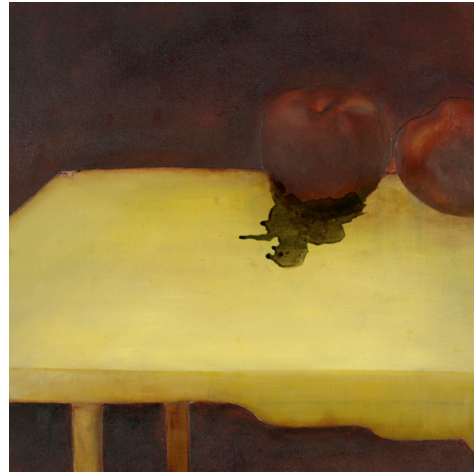
American Paintings to better understand my thoughts and my art, and *National Geographic*, *The Smithsonian*, and *The Wilson Quarterly* to learn about the world; documentaries on PBS such as that of Ethiopian women leaking urine due to birthing traumas, and the confinement pressures suffered by Navy officers on ship allowed me a glimpse at other lifestyles and cultures. I wanted to learn about how other people addressed and solved their problems; the books, The Animal In You by Roy Feinson and Cinescopes: What Your Favorite Movies Reveal About You by Risa Williams and Ezra Werb, showed me that societies need their members to fulfill different roles. And in that way, variation is inherently necessary; the book Women Who Run With The Wolves by Clarissa Pinkola Estes Ph.D. was essential in guiding me through this personal quest of curiosity by encouraging me to wonder and trust myself; I dreamt of gorillas—then looked up their symbolism. Dream interpretation was crucial because it helped me decipher how I was changing, and how I could change more; I thought about the past, present, and future and their simultaneous presence in the mind; most recently I came across the documentary *The Secret* based on the book by Rhonda Byrne, and it filled me with hope because it highlights how the universe is overflowing with possibility. After this search, it's easy for me to believe that there's always another way.

I had several wonderful conversations about these and other ranging themes with various people. The paintings mimic the fact that I talked to some people about the possibility of dinosaurs, and the quiet beauty of decaying apples to others. These

themes appear in the works *T-rex: contingency* and *Brood* respectively. Like the conversations, each work developed under different circumstances.



T-rex: contingency
Oil on panel
24x35in



Brood
Oil on muslin-coated panel
12x12in

Hence, the imagery emerged through a variety of methods: writing and sketching; abstract mark-making—which I interpreted roughly like a Rorschach test; desire to paint certain subjects; visual interpretation of a passage or idea from a book or dream; I also referenced internet images and life models. Investigating these varied possibilities also allowed me to discover new ways of working.

One of the most important conceptual and technical developments was that of using the plasticity of paint to enhance a subject's symbolic attributes. For example, in *Swallow*, the tender yellows and lilacs of the softly painted feathers created the vulnerability and delicate beauty of this bird. This figure then appeared threatened by

the rougher, heavy smears of dark muck that collapsed around it. Yet, the paint-sculpted bird excrement below the figure speaks about the bird's own creation of filth.



Meanwhile, *Flinger's* application of paint and color was light and smoky alluding to the transcendence of the gorilla, its banana, and its environment.

Swallow
Oil on muslin-coated panel
16x12in



Flinger
Oil on muslin-coated panel
11x8.5in

While the diversity of subject matter developed as a more-or-less linear progression, all works were completed at relatively the same time

pointing to their development as both linear and cyclical. The linear progression points to a psychological movement from exterior environments to internal states of development, from the outer landscapes bordered by walls in *Oscillate*, to the dark, interior voids of *Viscous Discombobulation*. And the developments of one influenced

the completion of others. *Viscous Discombobulation's* wet application of paint was the finishing emergence in *Juicy Spurt* which was created early on in the series. Thus, my process also records collaboration between progress and reflection.



Oscillate
Oil on muslin-coated panel
30x36in



Juicy Spurt
Oil on muslin-coated panel
24x36in



Viscous Discombobulation
Oil on muslin-coated panel
37.5x50in

Exhibition

The exhibition consists of 11 paintings ranging in size (8.5 by 11in to 52 by 40in) and shape (rectangles, squares, and ovals). The paintings were also hung in disparate orders to highlight the idea of diversity and change.

Analysis of Imagery

Colors create mood and psychological impact.

The subjects exist in abstracted spaces which are often composed of color fields and a few objects to suggest a setting. These essential spaces stress the symbolism of the imagery.

The cropping of figures is often used to signal the image's limited point of view and its context within a larger world.

A soft, diffused light quality enhances the idea of the imagery as metaphor rather than an attempt to imitate realistic visual phenomena.

The works are built from thin, translucent layers to successively richer ones to achieve the illusion of deep pictorial depth. The three-dimensionality of forms becomes physical by the layering of paint. Thicker layers sit on the surface of the piece and declare their materiality while thinner layers recede and suggest illusion.

These techniques connect the works despite the series' broadness. I also see that these are limitations that can be broken to push the concept of heterogeneity.

Conclusion

This began as a quest to try to figure out what is important and true about the world. Through this endeavor, I opened myself up to a bombardment of information. I housed the doubts and tribulations of uncertainty because I believed it would feed potential to my work and life. Because of my broad search, I learned to appreciate that possibilities are created because the world is arrayed and ever-changing. While my recognition of the relative state of the world was terrifying because it left me feeling groundless, it's also liberated me. And so, I grew as a painter and creative mind. The resulting works embody the search that led me to a greater sense of self while embracing the diversity, heterogeneity and complexity of a shifting world. I approached this series of paintings with an eagerness to make each important because of its divergence from the rest. These paintings radiate energy because of their instability.